



For the Good Times

by MIC REES

A MID-WINTER SATURDAY IN 2010. The Dogs are in Darwin. Not an option, I'm petrified of flying. The mighty Borough face the Scorpions at Casey. That trip could take longer to negotiate than the one facing the Bullies. I've decided to see an encounter that once upon a time represented the finest that western suburbs football had to offer. In the black and white corner... Parkside, winners of fourteen Division 1 premierships. Their opponents... twelves times Division 1 champions Braybrook, resplendent in their black jumper with a red sash.

These giants of western suburban football have mighty honour rolls of players who've graduated to the highest echelon of Australia's game. Braybrook could claim to be the most prolific producer of quality junior footballers in the nation. Ted Whitten Snr, Doug Hawkins, Brian Wilson and Wee Georgie Bisset are but a few to have graduated from the Brookers' Pennell Reserve nursery. That foursome accumulated more than a thousand AFL/VFL games between them, Wilson won a Brownlow and Bisset was, perhaps, robbed of that honour in 1969. Hawkins graced the Western Oval for nigh on two decades and the great E.J. Whitten earned the moniker Mr Football. Some say he's been the greatest ever player. While Parkside's contribution is more modest, it has seen twenty of its former sons advance to the indigenous game's premier competition.

These clubs were the strongest in the old Footscray District Football League.

But when the competition changed its name to the Western Region league in 2000 it was as if the two clubs were unprepared for modern times.

Parkside ushered in the new era in the best possible way by taking the Division 1 pennant in 2000 and grabbing another title three years later. But in 2007 they were relegated.

Braybrook made the Division 1 finals in 2002 after a remarkable surge from nowhere, but in 2003 they were relegated. Parkside have been around the mark in Division 2, but Braybrook have struggled. It's a far cry from the 1970s, when the Brook dominated the Footscray District league at senior and junior levels. Since then, families have moved out to suburbs on the western fringe like Hoppers Crossing and Melton. With so few families left in the 3019 postcode, Braybrook's once bountiful junior program became barren.

The traditionalist in me is saddened to hear of the struggles these two former titans have recently endured. I'm hoping the rumours suggesting their demise have been greatly exaggerated. I've lined up a few interviews with club members during the game and I'll do another few by phone afterwards.

Game day

UNDER MURKY SKIES I walk the four-kilometre trip from my cosy abode in West Footscray to the Mervyn G. Hughes Oval at the Turner Reserve, the home of the Parkside Football Club, located between the iconic Flemington Racecourse and Victoria University. When I arrive I'm surprised at how patchy the playing surface appears; winter 2010 hasn't been as dry as recent years.

Parkside's reserves have an easy victory in the curtain-raiser, 17.15 (117) to 4.5 (29).

The first clash of these rivals took place on Saturday 30 May 1931, under the auspices of the then Footscray District Junior Football League. According to the *Footscray Advertiser*, Braybrook prevailed with a hard-fought victory by eight points. They met later that season in the inaugural FDJFL grand final. On Saturday 5 September just over 300 spectators filed into Yarraville Oval and saw Parkside win by thirty-eight points, 11.19 (85) to 7.5 (47), to claim the competition's first premiership and the Advertiser Shield.



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Today's combatants have met in three Division 1 grand finals – Parkside were victorious in 1931 and 1948, Braybrook were triumphant in the Olympic year of 1956.

When the two sides met earlier in season 2010 a nine-goal first quarter from Parkside was enough to bust the Brookers by sixty-three points. The result took Parkside's record to 3-2 and left Braybrook sitting at 0-5. In the ensuing two months Parkside had been rocked by the departure of senior coach Garry Turner, who had resigned for personal reasons. Club stalwart David Orchard took over.

Going into this match, Parkside have a 10-3 record, good enough for a share of top spot on the ladder with Albanvale and North Footscray. Braybrook have a 2-11 record after victories over Laverton and North Sunshine.

Braybrook captain Daniel 'Roy' Lever, sporting a mid-length afro (think late '60s, early '70s, Lew Alcindor/Kareem Abdul-Jabbar), wins the toss and elects to kick to the Flemington racecourse end. The hosts' co-captain Chris Muratore notches the first major score when he taps the ball in from the goalsquare. When Mohammed Khartabil, a "man mountain", scores Parkside's second goal moments later, there already are warning bells for the visitors. Braybrook bounce back but they're unable to capitalise on their good work until late in the quarter. Parkside lead Braybrook 4.4 (28) to 2.2 (14).



Braybrook Football Club

FOUNDED 1874

COLOURS Black and red

NICKNAME *The Brookers*

GROUND Pennell Reserve, Braybrook

AFL/VFL PLAYERS PRODUCED

Lyle Anderson (Footscray), Norm Armstrong (Footscray), Lou Barker (Footscray), Niels Becker (Footscray), George Bisset (Footscray/Collingwood), Daryl Collins (Footscray), Denis Collins (Footscray, Carlton, Richmond), John Cuzzupe (Footscray), Wally Donald (Footscray), Ian Foreman (Footscray), Bob Fox (Footscray), Bob Gray (Footscray), Robert Groenewegen (Footscray), Wally Harris (Footscray), Doug Hawkins (Footscray/Fitzroy), Dal Kennedy (Footscray), Bennie Le Sueur (Footscray/Collingwood), Jack Logan (Footscray), Ivan Marsh (Footscray), Gary Merington (Footscray), Brian Prior (Footscray), Ken Scott (Footscray), Bob Spargo (Footscray), Ricky Spargo (Footscray), George Thompson (Footscray), Ray Walker (Footscray), Dick Wearmouth (Footscray), Don Whitten (Footscray), Ted Whitten Snr (Footscray), Brian Wilson (Footscray, North Melbourne, Melbourne, St Kilda).

The Stalwart – Ray Barber

EVERY SPORTING TEAM NEEDS A MAN LIKE RAY BARBER. He's been a Parkside man for well over half his fifty-seven years. As well as his commitment to 'Parks', Barber has served the West Coast Eagles as a trainer for their Melbourne games since the 1992 season.

Ray joined Parkside after a family friend asked him and his brother Mick to join. After completing his playing career in the early 1980s, Ray returned to the club in 1988. He's been a trainer and since 1999 he's co-ordinated the junior program at Turner Reserve.

It's this involvement that I'm most interested in. Recruiting and retaining junior footballers has always been a tough ask for Parkside. Their problems are two-fold. The club's ground, surrounded by Footscray Park, Flemington racecourse and the Royal Melbourne Showgrounds, is somewhat removed from the residential areas attractive for young families with children. And the club struggles to hold on to juniors who succumb to the lure of playing in the more glamorous Essendon District league just across the Maribyrnong River. Ray said:

The only junior team we have at present is an under-thirteen team. We're planning to go on a recruiting drive at the end of the season.

I asked Ray if he thought Edgewater, the housing development adjacent to Turner Reserve, could be the salvation to his club, providing a steady stream of juniors. He's hopeful that Parkside may benefit from Edgewater in the same way that junior football...

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Second Quarter

NATHAN JUEGAN'S CLEVER SNAP results in his second goal and Parkside's fifth. Braybrook respond with an Aaron Kelly mark and goal. Big Khattabi slots his second for the game. Hard-working Braybrook ruckman Michael Lever's tussle in the ruck with Julian Storey is a highlight. The home team's lead at the long break is nineteen points – Parkside 8.10 (58) to Braybrook's 6.3 (39).

Despite almost expiring through hypothermia, I'm satisfied with the quality of football. The half-time margin is a lot closer than I'd imagined. I retire to the kitchen.

but my options are limited. A Polystyrene cup containing a Upton's teabag does the trick for now.

Chadiuite – Zeno Tzatzaris

TURNER RESERVE IS WHERE ZENO TZATZARIS' football journey and ended. Sort of! His original team was Sunshine under two mates, Ch<< Kouteris and Souli Ktenidis, played junior footy at Parkside, >> he joined them there in 1977.

Zeno played in an under-fifteen premiership team and an under-seventeen team that lost a grand final before he made his way to the Western Oval in 1983. He reached the summit of Australia's game when he was selected in Footscray's senior team for their Round 2 clash in 1984 against Geelong at VFL Park

I asked Zeno what he remembered most about his first senior game with the Dogs:

My opponent was Terry Bright. It was an overcast day, but the ground was in terrific condition. I managed to have a couple of bounces early on. My most vivid memory of the game was when Jackson tackled me by the shorts, and I was forced to rush the ball through. We lost, and I got dropped the following week.

Zeno played most of his thirty-four games with the Dogs in defence. His seven seasons at the Western Oval were blighted by several serious knee injuries and his AFL Career came to an end in 1990.

Tzatzaris found his way back to Turner Reserve in 1991. His coach upon his return was the legendary John Sharp. Zeno said:

Mark Baulch, my housemate at the time, absolutely idolised Sharpy from his playing and coaching days. Yarraville in the VFA. When my time at Footscray was over I just wanted to go back to Parkside, have a kick with my mates, and go on the end of season footy trip.

Zeno's Encore in black and white stripes included a premiership in 1996.

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Third quarter

TO THE SURPRISE OF FEW, the bigger bodies of Parkside start to dictate terms at the stoppages. Sam Thurston takes a nice mark and from a tight angle squeezes the ball through the big sticks for Braybrook. Trent Tyrrell and Darcy Dunstan are providing Parkside with tremendous drive from the back half. The margin is out to

fifty-six points as the three-quarter time siren sounds.

Tempers flare. There's some pushing and jumper-pulling and name-calling. I hear one player scream: "He head-butted me twice... *twice!*"

Parkside coach Orchard remains calm and keeps his instructions simple. "Forget about what happened a few minutes ago. Just continue putting pressure on your direct opponent. And kick another ten goals."

Living legend - Barry Priest

BARRY PRIEST'S RECORD WITH THE BRAYBROOK FOOTBALL CLUB includes 358 senior games, four premierships, five club best and fairest awards and two A-Grade competition best and fairest awards (1973 and '75). The competition award has been named after him since the late '80s.

Priest was comfortable at either end of the field (like E.J. Whitten), and was never reported during his senior career. His No.16 guernsey has been retired.

Priest says what he remembers most about Braybrook's battles with Parkside were his clashes with Parkside hard man Ron 'The Beast' Fraser, a player whom he rates as one of his three toughest opponents:

Ron Fraser, Mick Clements of Seddon and Spotswood's Terry Fogarty are the three best footballers I played on.

Parkside made enquiries about Priest's... Brookers had clinched their...